

A HOLISTIC EVANGELIZATION OF KOREAN CHURCHES  
IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

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Doctor of Ministry

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## ABSTRACT

In spite of the numerical growth of the Korean church in Korea and in the Los Angeles area, there are many problems directly traceable to an inadequate understanding and management of evangelism. It must be seen that new understandings will make possible a more effective ministry, both inside and outside the church, through a holistic evangelism.

This project consists of six chapters. The first three trace the tradition of evangelical history in Korea and the witness of various understandings of the worldwide evangelistic movement. These traditions must be considered open to change as we develop a system of total evangelism for the Los Angeles area. Chapter IV analyzes different aspects of the Korean churches in this area in order to formulate an appropriate system of evangelism. Chapter V integrates various evangelical tendencies into the holistic approach of total evangelization for the Korean-American churches.

Evangelism is not a separate part of the work within the church's structure; it is the whole ministry of the church and its reason for being and acting in the community. The author calls this the total ministry in terms of a holistic evangelization, grounded in the evangelical tradition of the Korean churches and worldwide evangelical witnesses. It is the author's conclusion that the Korean church in this

area must seek a holistic evangelism which is concerned with individual and social, physical and spiritual needs of Korean-Americans.

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Although the history of Korean immigration goes as far back as 1903, it was only in recent years that the American society has become increasingly aware of rapidly growing Korean communities. A large influx of new Korean immigrants into the United States began after the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. The American government eliminated the national-origin quota system that discriminated against Asian immigrants. As a result of this, the Koreans have become more and more visible in the metropolitan areas throughout the United States, particularly in the Los Angeles area.

According to Dr. Yu's study, there were about 55,000 Koreans in Los Angeles County and 5,000 in Orange County by March, 1979.<sup>1</sup> This is considered as 15% of the whole Korean population in the United States. Four years have passed since this estimate was made, and there is no doubt that the number of Koreans in the Los Angeles area has been increasing rapidly during the last several years. According to the

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<sup>1</sup>Eui-Young Yu, "Koreans in Los Angeles: Size, Distribution, and Composition," in Earl H. Phillips, Eun Sik Yang, and Eui-Young Yu (eds.) Koreans in Los Angeles Prospects and Promises. (Koryo Research Institute, Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, Los Angeles, 1982) 28.

1980 census,<sup>2</sup> there were 60,618 Koreans in Los Angeles County and 11,339 in Orange County.

Applying a conservative annual increase rate of 3%,<sup>3</sup> the population cited for 1980 would have grown to 90,645 by 1983. The number of Koreans in the Los Angeles area is often stated to be about 200,000. This figure could be grossly exaggerated. It is probably safe to estimate that the number of Koreans living in the Los Angeles area is between 120,000 and 150,000.

There were 320 church congregations listed in the 1982 directory of the greater Los Angeles Area Korean Community. The number of Korean ethnic churches in the area has increased more than thirty times during the past eighteen years. The Korean Directory also estimates that the number of congregations increases by thirty each year. This would indicate a total of 350 at the present time.

Another much-stated statistic concerning Koreans in the Los Angeles area indicates that sixty-five percent of Koreans in the area are protestants, and nine percent are Catholic.<sup>4</sup> Comparing this figure with the percent of

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<sup>2</sup>1980 Census of Population, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, California 6-19. Vol. I, Characteristics of the Population (Washington: United States Government Printing Office)

<sup>3</sup>Yu, 25.

<sup>4</sup>

Chan-Hie Kim, "Christian Churches in the Korean-American community." Unpublished Paper Presented to the 135th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Church History, San Francisco, December 29, 1983.

Christians in Korea (22.6% of total Korean population),<sup>5</sup> it can be seen that the religious involvement of Korean immigrants is greater than Koreans in their homeland. This is, perhaps, indicative of the social and spiritual needs of the immigrants. The church has been in a most strategic position to meet the vital needs of the Korean-American community. This unusual tie between community and church has been in existence for eighty years — since the beginning of the Korean community in 1903. Despite this inevitable relationship between community and church, the existence and importance of the role of the church has been questioned by the community, itself, in recent years.

#### Statement of Problem

The Korean church in the Los Angeles area is faced with many perplexing issues, mainly because of the rapid growth of the church. There are already some signs of stress and strain within the church, some problems of long standing. Some problems are brought on by the quality and theology of leaders and also by sociological phenomena which appear in an immigrant community.

The largest problem in the church originates with the ministers. Although we estimate the number of congregations to be in excess of 350, the number of Korean minis-

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

ters is probably over 500. According to Marion Dearman's survey,<sup>6</sup> sixty-seven percent of the churches were established by "the ministers," while twenty-eight percent were started by "the congregation," and five percent by "the denomination." These figures show that many churches were established by the ministers because of their personal needs rather than because of the needs of the community.

The fact that a high percentage of the churches were established by ministers again demonstrates the high level of religious entrepreneurship among the immigrant ministers. The method apparently followed in the establishment of new congregations is that ministers seek out people from their localities in Korea; people they went to school with, extended family members, and the like, to form nuclei of congregations.

In many cases, the motivation for establishing a new church is the minister's personal need to survive rather than the need of evangelization, even though the ministers' profess the need for evangelization for the community. Still, a large number of immigrating ministers from Korea become religious entrepreneurs and try by every possible means to create congregation. They do not hesitate to take members away from other churches. Scrambling congregations may give a numerical boost to one church; another will lose a certain <sup>b</sup> number of members. The problem, then, becomes intense competition between congregations.

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<sup>6</sup>Marion Dearman, "Structure and Function of Religion in the Los Angeles Korean Community: Some Aspects," in Phillips, Yang, and Yu, 175.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

The most painful and shameful phenomenon in the Korean church in this area is the disputes and division. The main reason for divisions stems from individual interests and honor. When Koreans migrate to the United States, their social class lines are totally broken and need to be re-established in the more heterogeneous society. The church is the most common place for rebuilding relationships and forming new ones. Most Koreans are expecting social benefits rather than spiritual when they unite with a congregation.<sup>8</sup> The fact that most church members plan to use the church to establish a new social order and fulfill their personal needs becomes the major cause of disputes among the people.

Another bedrock problem in the Korean church is proliferation because of denominationalism. According to the Korean Directory of the Greater Los Angeles Area for 1982, there are approximately forty protestant denominations, including Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and many smaller groups. Compared with eighty protestant denominations<sup>9</sup> in Korea, forty in the United States is not surprising. It is easy for newly-arrived immigrants to seek out and establish contact with churches in the denomination of their choice. This has, however, created a condition of confusion and incompetency in the churches. Many churches sell a

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<sup>8</sup>Dearman, 176.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 167.

cheap brand of Christianity and mislead their members with an unclear philosophy or theology.

According to Dearman's survey,<sup>10</sup> over ninety percent of the Korean ministers defined themselves as fundamentalist, conservative, neo-orthodox, evangelical, or pentecostal. All of these are conservative in most respects. Accordingly, Korean churches have been interested in church extension, itself. Many Korean ministers are occupied with the idea of numerical church growth. Attendance, amount of offering, etc., become matters of concern for ministers. This trend basically circumvents the concerns of the ministry in their home country, where the basic theological orientation is an emphasis on salvation of the individual soul as the prime and unique mission of the Christian Church.

The church, as an organized medium of spiritual endeavor, is a form of human community and a sociological phenomenon. The Christian faith is compatible with social and political responsibility which Christians face on every level of human community. In this perspective the conservative lines of Korean ministers are believed to fail their prime function in meeting the basic needs of their community.

A spiritual vacuum of the Korean church is the most serious problem of today. What seems clear to those who carefully watched the circumstances of the Korean Church is

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 170.

the hunger and thirst for spiritual needs. There could be observed Korean churches in this area which have a lot of migrating groups of Chirstians who are not satisfied with the spiritual life of their congregations and are floating from one church to another.

#### Organization of the Thesis.

The most important reason for the problems being faced by the Korean churches in the Los Angeles area is inadequate understanding and management of evangelism. It has become evident that there is a need for a better understanding of total evangelism. It would seem that a holistic evangelism is broad enough to facilitate the renewal of the Korean church in this area. The church should begin with an understanding of total evangelism and development of new models grounded in the tradition and history of the Korean church and the witness of the history of various evangelical movements.

This, then, is the task of this project: to trace the traditions of the worldwide missionary movement in the last two hundred years in order to give a usable concept of a holistic evangelism. This will give an understanding of the meaning and practice of evangelism for today. This will be explored in the next chapter. In the third chapter, evangelistic traditions of the Korean church will be analyzed. Five separate periods of growth in the Korean church

will be explored in terms of evangelism.

The fourth chapter will analyze the environment of the Korean church in the Los Angeles area and its cultural, sociological and theological aspects. Our understanding of all of these aspects will be used in formulating a holistic evangelism.

The fifth chapter will develop a new strategy for creating a holistic evangelism for the Korean-American churches.

## CHAPTER II

## EVANGELISM

Worldwide missionary activity during the last two hundred years has been largely Biblical, pietistic, evangelical and conservative. However, with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948, missionaries began to reinterpret Jesus' meaning when He said that the field is the world. Today the world is in desperate need of a resurgence of Christian missionary activity. In religious circles, both conservative and ecumenical groups have been called to seriously consider the Biblical mandate to involve themselves in working for the outward visibility of church unity, so that the world might believe (John 17:21).<sup>1</sup>

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Christian church experienced rapid expansion throughout the world, and numerous missionary organizations were formed.

Until the Lausanne Congress, conservative circles tended to ignore the resurgence of evangelistic concern within the World Council of Churches. Some conflict between conservatives and ecumenicals still exists. We hope that lines of communication may be established between them.

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<sup>1</sup>Roger C. Bassham, Mission Theology 1948-1975  
(South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979) xiv.

Also, renewal within the Roman Catholic Church is taking place since the election of Pope John XXII. Catholic mission theology has been changing since Vatican II, when the church became involved, at least to the point of awareness, in the challenge of the world today.

This chapter will define and propose possible activities for a new evangelism movement. We will brace and analyze the development of ecumenical, conservative and Roman Catholic evangelism.

#### A. Ecumencial Evangelism.

Representatives of many missionary groups met at the World Missionary Conference of 1910, under the leadership of John Mott. This conference was held in Edinburgh and heard of the great mission survey to be undertaken. Theologians attending the conference began the formulation of a theological base for world evangelism.<sup>2</sup> The major contributions of the conference were: (1) defining mission as the task of the whole church; (2) identifying the world as the mission field; (3) becoming aware of the need for contextual mission work; (4) discussing the close relationship between the church and society; (5) clarifying the relationships between Christianity and other faiths; and (6) calling for unity among Christians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 19.

This Conference was the beginning of the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century. Its work made possible the International Missionary Council (1921) which united with the World Council of Churches in 1961 at New Delhi, the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches. During the time between the two conferences, the church's concept of mission changed from a geographical notion to a theological concept. Whereas the emphasis had been on individual mission work, the call went out to the whole church to reach out in response to the Great Commission of the whole world. It should be mentioned that the IMC meeting held at Tambrana, Madras, in December of 1938, emphasized the close relationship between evangelism and social involvement in a holistic understanding of the gospel.

The gospel "carries with it the vision and hope of social transformation and of the realization of such ends as justice, freedom and peace." Therefore, no church can escape the responsibility of making "active efforts to serve community, . . . social programs grow out of the gospel."<sup>4</sup>

After 1961, the exploration of the ecumenical mission theologies can be divided into four major phases – Upssala, Sweden, in 1968; Bangkok Conference in 1973; the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in 1975, and Melbourne in 1980. The Upssala Conference sent out a call for a more balanced

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<sup>4</sup>Findings and Recommendations of the IMC, Tambrana, Madras, India, December 12-29, 1938, in The World Mission of the Church (London: IMC, 1939) 36, quoted in *ibid.*, 24.

view of the vertical and horizontal interpretations of the gospel. This was presented by Visser't Hooft: "I believe that, with regard to the great tension between the vertical interpretation of the gospel as essentially concerned with human relationship in the world . . ."<sup>5</sup>

The evangelical movement has criticized the ecumenicals for equating social action and evangelism. Therefore, the assembly called for a mission theology which would attempt a balance between concern with God's saving action in the world and the interpretation of the gospel as it deals with human relationships. Evangelism has an innate human context from which it cannot be separated.

The Bangkok Conference on "Salvation Today," 1973, developed the ecumenical movement into a new mission theology. At this conference, salvation was defined in two different ways.

The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life. We understand salvation as newness of life — the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col. 2:9). It is salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and society, mankind and "the growing creation" (Rom. 8:19). As evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures that humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the

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<sup>5</sup>W. A. Visser't Hooft, "The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement," in Upssala Report 1968 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968) 317-318.

Justification of the sinner and in social and political justice.

Liberation movements were linked with the mission of God. Salvation was identified as the agent capable of freeing people from sin and from all forms of oppression. Here the church is credited with action that facilitates God's mission for conquering oppression. The Bangkok Conference struggled with two understandings of God's mission. "Should mission primarily be understood as God's work in the world in which the church participates; or should mission be viewed as something which God accomplishes through the church in the world?"<sup>7</sup>

Evangelism and social action were considered essential to a balanced and comprehensive understanding of salvation. Of the deliberations at Bangkok, the most significant outcome was an attempt at an adequate description of salvation with consideration for the personal and social, the individual and corporate dimensions of life. Criticism came from the conservative evangelical groups and at least one Roman Catholic. They felt that the balance of the work was wrong because the emphasis was placed on the church's social responsibilities to the detriment of evangelism.<sup>8</sup>

The Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches

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<sup>6</sup>"Bangkok Conference, Salvation Today, 1973" in G. H. Anderson and T. Stransky, (eds.) Mission Trends No. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 236.

<sup>7</sup>Bassham, 94-95.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 96.

in 1975 continued to reflect upon the themes presented at Bangkok. The church's responsibility to both evangelism and social action was reaffirmed

The assembly re-emphasized the responsibility of the whole church to address the whole gospel in word and deed to the whole person in the whole world. "The confession of Christ in word and deed, in a holistic approach to mission, was one of the strongest emphases at Nairobi."<sup>9</sup> The conference defined Evangelism as "the comprehensive act of proclaiming the Good News of Christ and serving as a church in obedience to Christ's example and commission."<sup>10</sup>

The 1980 ecumenical gathering was the Ninth World Conference on Mission and Evangelism held in Melbourne. The Melbourne conference concentrated on a mandate for mission and evangelism "that shows a passionate search for the Kingdom of God in the heart of oppression and human struggles."<sup>11</sup> "Three of four study sections dealt with micro-social issues; poverty, various types of social struggles (institutional, religious, political conflicts, human rights, economic systems, and urban life) and divergent manifestations of human power (ideological, organizational, financial, punitive, military, technological, and political)."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>11</sup>Orlando E. Costas, Christ Outside the Gate (New York: Orbin, 1982) 140.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

The theme at Melbourne centered on transformation and renewal. The church was challenged to solve the problems of the oppressed by dealing with oppressive conditions. Changing those conditions could be accomplished through a deep personal transformation through Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Now we turn to the position and development of conservatives.

#### B. Conservative Evangelism

The term, "conservative evangelical circles," is used to describe those Christians, church-related organizations, and bodies outside the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement.<sup>14</sup> Theologically, conservative evangelicals are characterized by a strong emphasis on personal experience. They accept and promulgate a fundamentalist theology. They strictly believe in the truth of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, substitutionary atonement, physical resurrection and the second coming of Christ.

During the last two hundred years, the conservative evangelical movements have often considered themselves to be the worldwide missionary movement. The vitality of many missionary societies and groups has been unprecedented, par-

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<sup>13</sup> Your Kingdom Come, Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 194-195.

<sup>14</sup> Bassham, 173.

ticularly during the nineteenth century. It was at this time that the need for close unity became evident, as was the need for a clear statement of their conceptions of the Christian faith.

The Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association, formed in 1917, at Princeton, New Jersey, was the evangelical movement's first and oldest missionary association.<sup>15</sup> The IFMA, from its inception, has stood firmly for a "strict adherence to the evangelical doctrines and standards of historical Christianity and the burden to carry the gospel to those regions where Christ has not been named."<sup>16</sup> Its driving force is a clear understanding of the church's mission to go into the whole unsaved world with the gospel of Christ.

From the beginning, the fundamentalist position was expressed in the IFMA's statement of faith. As a rule, fundamentalists did not include themselves in groups of Protestant denominations because of their concern that most Protestants were compromising the fundamental truths and vitality of the Christian faith.<sup>17</sup> It is on these grounds that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Originally quoted from C. Gordon Beacham, "The Jubilee of IFMA - Has God Used Us?" in IFMA Study Papers, 1967. 50th Annual Meeting, 25-28 September, 1967, held at Grace Chapel, Havertown, Pennsylvania. IFMA, mimeographed.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

the IFMA, throughout its history, has been opposed to the ecumenical movement. There are two great mandates of the IFMA: (1) to obey the Great Commission, and (2) to save souls. Both of these can be realized most easily through church growth.

The IFMA sponsored the first major conference of the evangelical movement: the Congress on World Missions in Chicago in 1960. "The evangelization of the world in this generation" became the announced goal of the movement because of the attention that was given to it at this conference. The driving theological concepts of the movement were formulated at this conference: obedience to the Great Commission, the equation of mission with evangelism and the call for unity among evangelical churches and institutions.<sup>18</sup>

The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association was founded by the National Association of Evangelicals in 1945 to promote mission endeavors. This missionary group of the NAE encourages co-operation and unity among evangelicals and promotes missionary activity which adheres to the evangelical Statement of Faith. The IFMA and the EFMA tend to interpret mission in terms of evangelism, evangelism in terms of proclamation of the Good News for the purpose of saving souls and saving souls in terms of increasing church membership.

There were three major surges of activity in the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 180-181.

exploration of the evangelical movement after 1960: (1) conferences of the 60's (Wheaton and Berlin); (2) the conference of the mid-70's (Lausanne); and, (3) the conference of the 80's (Pattaya). The evangelical movement sponsored the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966. The congress attempted a definition of "Biblical evangelism" that would emphasize the final authority of the scriptures. Mission and evangelism were identified as equal, and were defined as the proclamation of the gospel. Evangelism was understood to function in persuading sinners to accept Christ and to serve Him in the church. The congress was critical of the ecumenical movement and the Roman Catholic church because of their movement toward equating social action with evangelism, and, although it stressed the importance of the church working for social reform, it still held that evangelism is, primarily, proclamation.

In contrast to other recent ecumenical conferences, such as the Vatican Council, World Council of Churches' Assemblies, and the Conferences on Faith and Order and on Church and Society, (this congress) assumes both the Reformation principle of the final authority of the Bible and the apostolic emphasis on the evangelization of mankind as the primary mission of the church.<sup>20</sup>

The only discussion of Christian unity was in terms of evangelical unity and unity brought about by a common response to Biblical authority. Further discussion of many of these

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 221. Originally quoted from "Good News For a World in Need," CT. 11:1 (October 14, 1966) 34.

issues would be carried forward at the Lausanne conference.

In July of 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne observed a major change in evangelical mission theology. Although the conference still firmly believed in well-founded evangelical concepts, there was a diverging emphasis moving from evangelism to mission. Mission was defined as the total task of the church in the world, evangelism was the name given to the proclamation of the Christian message, and social action was to act as a partner in this missions.

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share His concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression . . . Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive.<sup>21</sup>

The consultation on World Evangelization held in Pattaya, Thailand, in 1980, was a thoroughgoing international conference as participants gathered from all over the world. The emphasis of the conference was in showing evangelism to be the essence of personal salvation. Pattaya reiterated the definitions of the Lausanne conference in speaking of the relationship between evangelism and social action. The conference accepted evangelism and social action as partners in the mission of the church but maintained a firm belief in the importance of personal salvation through the proclamation of

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<sup>21</sup>"Lausanne Covenant," and Lausanne Congress, 1974, appeared in Anderson and Stransky, 242.

the gospels.<sup>22</sup>

Evangelism has been seen to be the motivating force behind the whole church. The Roman Catholic Church has been clarifying its mission theology through evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel. The following section will trace developments within the Roman Catholic Church.

### C. Roman Catholic Evangelism

Roman Catholic mission theology before Vatican II defines mission as the proclamation of the gospel which will draw the hearers into communion with the true and only church. The idea that the church is the only true herald of Christian tradition is stressed in Roman Catholic mission theology. Therefore, before Vatican II, the main thrust was on the proliferation of the faith through the establishment of indigenous leaders. Pius XII was responsible for writing this Catholic mission theology:

The primary object of missionary activity as everyone knows, is to bring the shining light of Christian truth to new peoples and to form new Christians. To attain, however, this object, the ultimate one, missionaries must unremittingly endeavor to establish the church firmly among the peoples and to endow them with their own native hierarchy.<sup>23</sup>

Vatican II (1962-1965) was a landmark event in the history of Roman Catholic mission theology. The discussions and documents of Vatican II have made possible a clearer

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<sup>22</sup> Costas. 139.

<sup>23</sup> Bassham, 300.

understanding of the interdependency between mission and evangelism. Mission was found to be the core of the life of the church and call to all people to come into a full union with God. This mission is fulfilled through evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel and the establishment of new churches.

Those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the gospel are sent out by the church and go forth into the whole world to carry out the task of preaching the gospel and planting the church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Vatican II made it possible to accept the belief that even though the church is an essential part of salvation, the unchurched could be saved if, through no fault of their own, they had never heard the gospel and had not known the church, and if they fervently sought after God's will in their lives. The churches thus became aware of the need for vitality in dialogue and unity and cooperation among the world's churches in the universal task of evangelism.<sup>25</sup>

Following Vatican II, the Third General Conference of the Synod of Bishops met between September 27 and October 23, 1974, to discuss "The Evangelization of the Modern World." The final document of this conference was a papal exhortation entitled Evangelii Nuntiandi. After some debate about several different meanings of the word "evangelism," Pope Paul proposed an inclusive definition:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

For the church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: "Now I am making the whole of creation new." But there is no humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage,<sup>26</sup> and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs.

Most importantly, the Synod of Bishops and Evangelii Nuntiandi saw the task of evangelism and social action as including a commitment to liberation, based on the example of Christ and the demands of love. Salvation was defined as deliverance from all that oppresses and the joy of knowing God and being known.<sup>27</sup> Evangelizing the world is the essential mission of the church. Evangelism is a process which includes the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, living a life that is a channel of God's gifts of grace, the reconciliation of sinners with God and the perpetuating of Christ's sacrifice in the Mass.<sup>28</sup> The conference and papal

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>27</sup> Pope Paul VI. On Evangelization In the Modern World: An Exhortation on the Evangelization of the World Today (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1975) 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

exhortation both restated the value of and need for Christian unity in an attempt at offering a common witness of Christ to a world aching for transformation, liberation and renewal.

The Roman Catholic mission theology was carried into a third phase at the Puebla conference of the Latin American Bishops in 1979. There was a strong affirmation of the need to unify the ideas of evangelism and liberation, especially in the struggles in the Latin American countries. The conference pointed to the life and teachings of Christ and the special consideration given to the poor in His ministry as they called the whole church to a far-reaching discipleship which could free humanity from all bonds of oppression.

We now propose to proclaim the central truths of evangelization: Christ, our hope, is in our midst as the Father's envoy, animating the church with His Spirit and offering His word and His life to people today,<sup>29</sup> in order to lead them to full and complete liberation.

#### D. Total Evangelism

Particularly since the 1960's, dialogue has increased between the evangelicals, the ecumenicals, and the Roman Catholic Church. The evangelical movement has become increasingly aware of the need for greater response to the social aspects of evangelism and of the close relationship between evangelism and social action. The ecumenical movement,

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<sup>29</sup> John Eagleson and Phillip Scharper (eds.) Puebla and Beyond (New York: Orbis, 1979) 143-144.

on the other hand, has been criticized by the evangelicals because of their lack of emphasis on the primacy of personal transformation and renewal. The Roman Catholic Church has gradually increased opportunities for dialogue with both the ecumenical and the evangelistic movements.

Although there is much common ground between them, their emphases remain at variance.

The ecumenicals clearly recognize the necessity of proclamation but are more sensitive to the needs of the poor, the hungry and the oppressed. The evangelicals are aware of the desperation of the needy but are more attuned to the call to proclaim the gospel to the unchurched.

The divergent visions must be integrated and unified. Neither aspect may be allowed to carry more weight than the other. Both aspects are equally important in the mission of God. Only the shapes and visions are dissimilar. Essentially, evangelism is mission, the proclamation of Good News in word and deed, in taking the faith to the unevangelized, or in ministering to the persecuted, the hungry, or the dispossessed. Evangelism is holistic and must become an essential aspect of the total ministry with concerns for individuals - socially, physically, and spiritually. Evangelism is glad tidings, no matter in what condition or predicament. Its work is among people untouched by Christ, and also those borne down by every possible human condition.

The Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia states the thesis of "Evangelism in Latin America Today" as follows:

Evangelism is essential for the church; it is its primary task. Evangelism springs from God's election of "a special people of His own;" it is based on the continued mission of the Son of God among men; it originates in the Great Commission which Jesus left to his Church and it is sustained by the promise of the Spirit for this saving community. The fruit of evangelism is the building up of the Body of Christ on earth; the very survival of the Church depends on it. (Gen. 12:1-2; Ex. 19:5; Matt. 10:28; Mark 16:15; John 15:16; 17; 18; 20; 21; Acts 1:8; I Peter 2: 9-10) (Thesis 7).

Evangelism is a permanent task: "in season out of season." No situation absolves us from "announcing the great works of him who has called us from darkness into light." Neither secularism, nor the existence of other religions, nor the demands of other urgent tasks which Christians must fulfill, can relieve the Church of this responsibility which no other human institution can fulfill in its place. Evangelism must be carried on in a capitalist or in a socialist society or in any other which may emerge in history. Only the coming of God's kingdom in its fulness will relieve us from the task of evangelizing. (Acts 4:12; Gal. 1:18; I Cor. 11:4; I Tim. 2:5-7; II Tim. 4:1-5; I Peter 2:9) (Thesis 10).<sup>30</sup>

Thus, true evangelism must be "holistic or integrated" with the total ministry, just as Dr. Arias stated.<sup>31</sup>

Another thesis of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia gives a clear definition:

True evangelism is holistic; the whole gospel for the whole man and the whole of mankind. Evangelism addresses man in the totality of his being; individual and social,

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<sup>30</sup>"Thesis Boliviana de Evangelizacion en America Latina Hoy," IEMB, La Paz, June 1975. Monthly Letter about Evangelism (February 1975) Originally quoted from Mortimer Arias, "That the World May Believe," International Review of Mission V. 65. (January 1976) 128.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

physical and spiritual, historical and eternal. We reject, therefore, all dichotomies, ancient and modern, which reduce the gospel to one dimension or fragment of man who was created in the image and likeness of God. We do not accept the idea that evangelism means only "saving souls" and seeking exclusively "a change in the eternal status of the individual"; these concepts are biblically insufficient. We reject also the reduction of gospel to a programme for service or social development or to a mere instrument of socio-political programmes. (Matt. 9:35-38; Luke 4:18-19; Acts 16:31; I Tim. 4:6-10; II Tim. 1:10) (Thesis 2).

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 131.

## CHAPTER III

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE KOREAN CHURCH  
FROM THE EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, the author is going to describe the phenomena of Korean Church growth in terms of evangelism. The historical classifications are based on considerations regarding the eras of fast growth of the membership and the evangelical background of those eras.

## A. The First Era (1895-1904)

The official Protestant mission in Korea started in 1884,<sup>1</sup> but the beginning of the growth of the Korean church would be 1895.<sup>2</sup> Dr. L. George Paik suggests 1897 to be the beginning of the real growth.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development provided the following table to show the statistics of the early growth.

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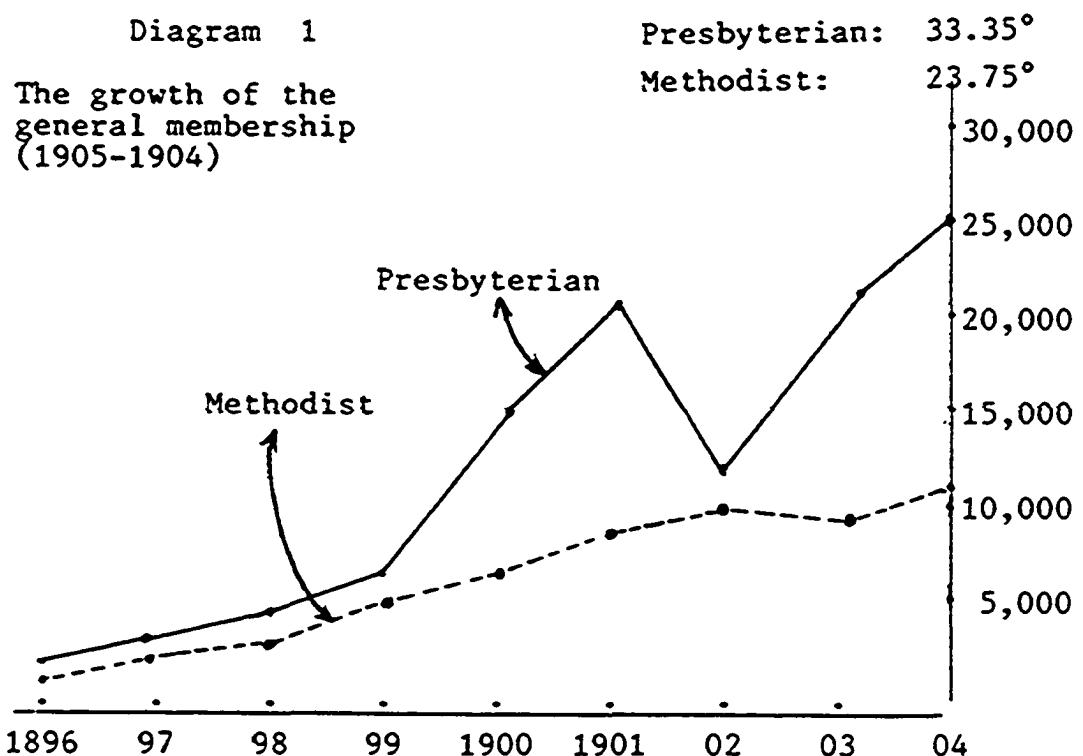
<sup>1</sup>L. George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971) 97. Dr. Horace Allen, the first official missionary sent by the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A., arrived on September 26, 1884.

<sup>2</sup>Roy E. Shearer, Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1975) 53-54.

<sup>3</sup>Paik, 263.

Year	Presbyterian		Methodist	
	General membership	Baptized	Membership	Baptized
1895			956	401
1896	2530	530	1826	
1897	3256	932	2888	
1898	4899	2099	3465	
1899	6265	2839	5205	
1900	14509	3710	6409	
1901	21126	5118	7795	
1902	11965	5796	9047	
1903	22662	7107	8694	
1904	25356	8766	10439	

The measurement shown in the table above could be transferred to the following diagram. This shows the annual growth rate of the two churches.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> The method used to measure the Average Annual Growth Rate were borrowed from Bob Waymire and Peter C. Wagner, The Church Growth Survey Handbook (Santa Clara: 1980)

During this era, Korea was in political as well as social turmoil. There was internal rebellion by the Tong Haks and external pressure from the Imperial Governments of both China and Japan. The Tong Hak movement rose up in 1893 – a revolution instigated by the peasants, who felt a surge of patriotism and retaliated against the political crisis. They felt this to be a result of corruption. They persisted in the revolution because the new spirit of patriotism demanded a change in the social structure. The Korean government petitioned the Japanese military power for help in putting down the revolution. This was done to the great frustration of the Korean peasants – most of the population at that time.

In 1894 there was a war between Japan and China, each striving to gain the political hegemony of the Asian continent. Of course, Korea was the first target of both countries. Control of the Korean Peninsula would afford entrance into the Asian Continent. This war ended in victory for Japan, which caused an immediate national crisis in the political identity of Korea.

Under these circumstances, Korea had to accept the fact that the country could no longer maintain its political independence. With these social and political changes came a changed attitude on the part of the people toward Christianity. The people came to the conclusion that Western technology could protect them and felt that through Christianity

they could find the opportunity and security they were seeking.

Along with the political and social turmoil, there was a religious hunger among the people. This is probably another factor to be considered as turning people toward Christianity, which, at that time, seemed to be a universal religion. Buddhism had been known in Korea since the year, 372, but was gradually losing its influence. Confucianism had been the state religion under the Yi dynasty but had developed little of the spiritual element in the hearts of the people.

Because of these political, social and religious factors, and because of the contagious enthusiasm of the early missionaries, the growth of Christianity was easy and rapid from the beginning. Missionary activity at this time was focused mainly on evangelism, which became a strong and unique tradition of the Korean Christian Church. It must be mentioned, also, that the missionary organizations did not want to be involved with the complex political disorder. They were satisfied to win people with evangelism, alone.

Generally speaking, the Korean people were beginning to experience a real crisis at that time. They turned to the church with the hope of political autonomy that they believed the Christian church could bring to them. The missionaries used personal evangelism to take advantage of this

opportunity. We can conclude, then, that personal and socio-political concerns co-existed in the church, but the greater emphasis was on personal evangelism through the "saving of souls."

#### B. The Second Era (1905-1918)

The second era can be considered a critical time in the history of the Korean Church, particularly in terms of growth. At the Edinburg Conference of 1910, the Korean Church growth was described as a genuine pentecost.<sup>5</sup> This evangelical awakening was initiated by the Reverend R. A. Hardie, who was a Canadian medical missionary affiliated with the Southern Methodists.

In 1903, Dr. Hardie confessed his faults before the missionary body and the Korean Church, leading to the confession of failure by other Christians. His conversion experience had a tremendous influence on the local churches, so that many participated in a genuine conversion movement.

In this era, another important event was the annexation of Korea by Japan, by force. This was in 1910. Korea lost its political independence.

The following tables show the growth during this era.

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<sup>5</sup>J. Edwin Orr, Evangelical Awakenings in Eastern Asia (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975) 33.

TABLE 2

Year	Presbyterian		Methodist	
	General Member	Baptized	General Member	Baptized
1905	37,409	11,061	18,140	
1906	56,934	14,353	32,718	
1907	72,968	18,081	33,319	
1908	94,981	24,239	37,030	
1909	119,273	30,377	38,390	
1910	140,470	39,394	37,722	
1911	144,261	46,934	37,035	
1912	127,228	53,003	30,674	
1913	144,261	60,149	30,234	
1914	121,108	62,033	30,388	
1915	145,616	62,166	29,321	
1916	146,413	63,202	29,109	
1917	149,526	66,120	28,488	
1918	160,909	61,696	26,338	

These statistics were provided by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development

At least three reasons for this rapid growth can be identified: (1) Revivalism through prayer meetings, (2) Revivalism through Bible study, and (3) the political crisis.

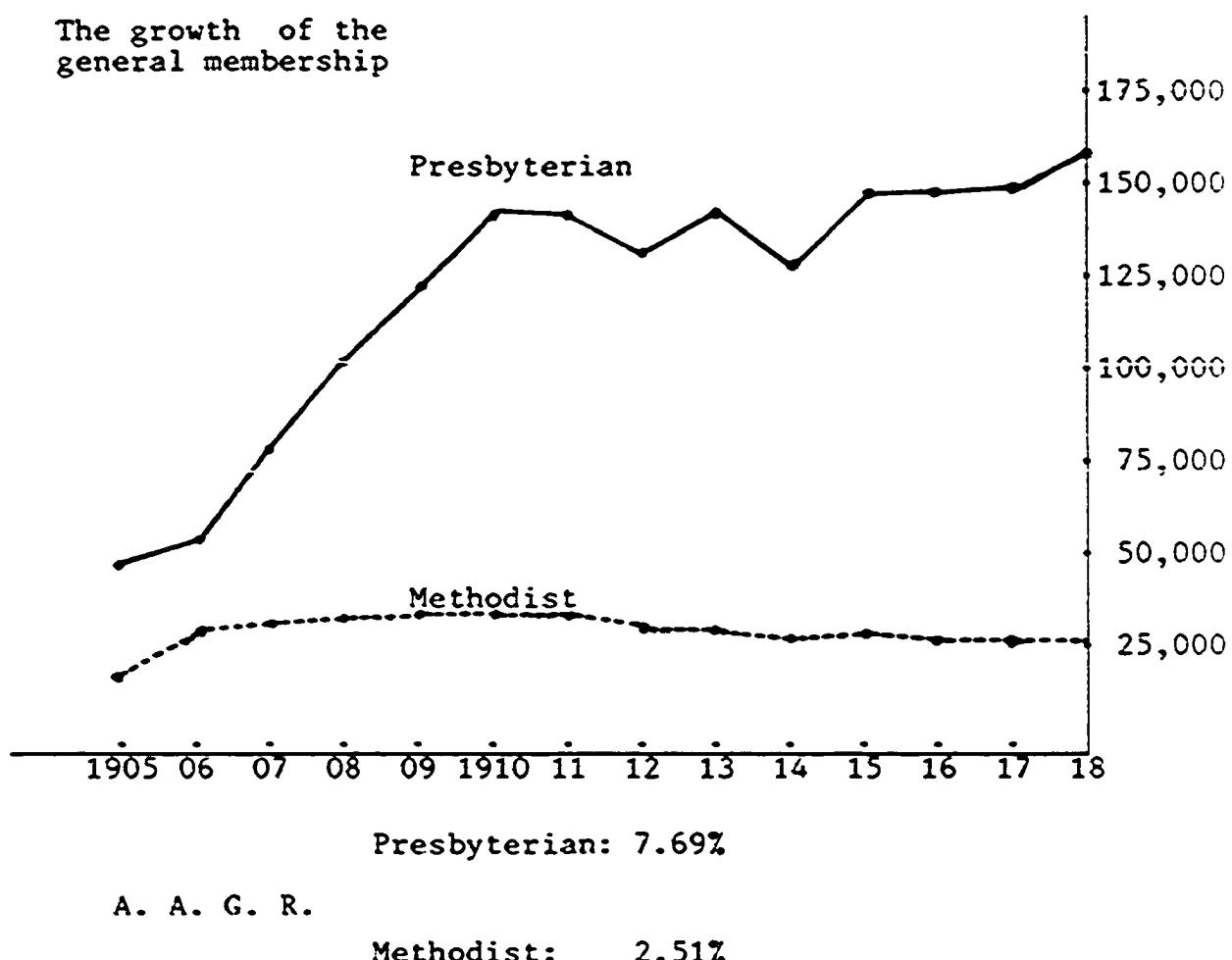
The initiation of the first cause came when the Rev. Sun Ju Kil became a leader of the Korean Pentecostal movement in 1907 after he confessed his personal sin before his congregation at Pyeong-Yang City.<sup>6</sup> This act of confession

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<sup>6</sup> Byung Il Jang, The Living Weed (Seoul: Hyung Rim Su, 1968) 50.

Diagram 2

The growth of the general membership



stimulated the churches to hold many prayer meetings. It was during this era that the early morning prayer meeting was initiated by Rev. Kil. This meeting was one of the mainstays of the pentecostal movement, has become world famous, and is still being observed in Korea.

A missionary has said of one such meeting in 1907:

The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne. It was not many, but one, born of one spirit, lifted to one father above. Just as on the day of pentecost, they were all together in one place, of one accord praying and suddenly there came from heaven the sound as of the rushing of mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

The second important factor of church growth in this era was Bible study, which evidently became a part of every revival meeting. Bible study was conducted primarily at the local and district level and the teaching was done by the missionaries. It became one of the mainstays of the evangelization. During the early days, the missionaries expended their greatest efforts on the Bible study classes. It was reported that in 1904, sixty percent of the Christians participated in Bible study.<sup>8</sup> As the movement spread throughout the land, many people began to work as Bible teachers.

The third factor, the political crisis, caused

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<sup>7</sup> William Blair and Bruce Hunt, The Korean Pentecost and the Suffering Followed (Carlisle, Eng: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 71

<sup>8</sup> Shearer, 61

great anxiety, insecurity and frustration among the people. When Japan destroyed the Korean government, the people wanted to escape from all types of oppression and agony. They accepted Christianity as the Messianic religion, believing it would give them at least personal inner freedom from the outward political frustration.

Generally speaking, in this era, the Korean people succeeded in building their church through prayer meetings, confession of sin and Bible study, with emphasis on personal evangelism. It should be noted that the political frustration of the people was alleviated by personal spiritual satisfaction.

### C. The Third Era (1919-1944)

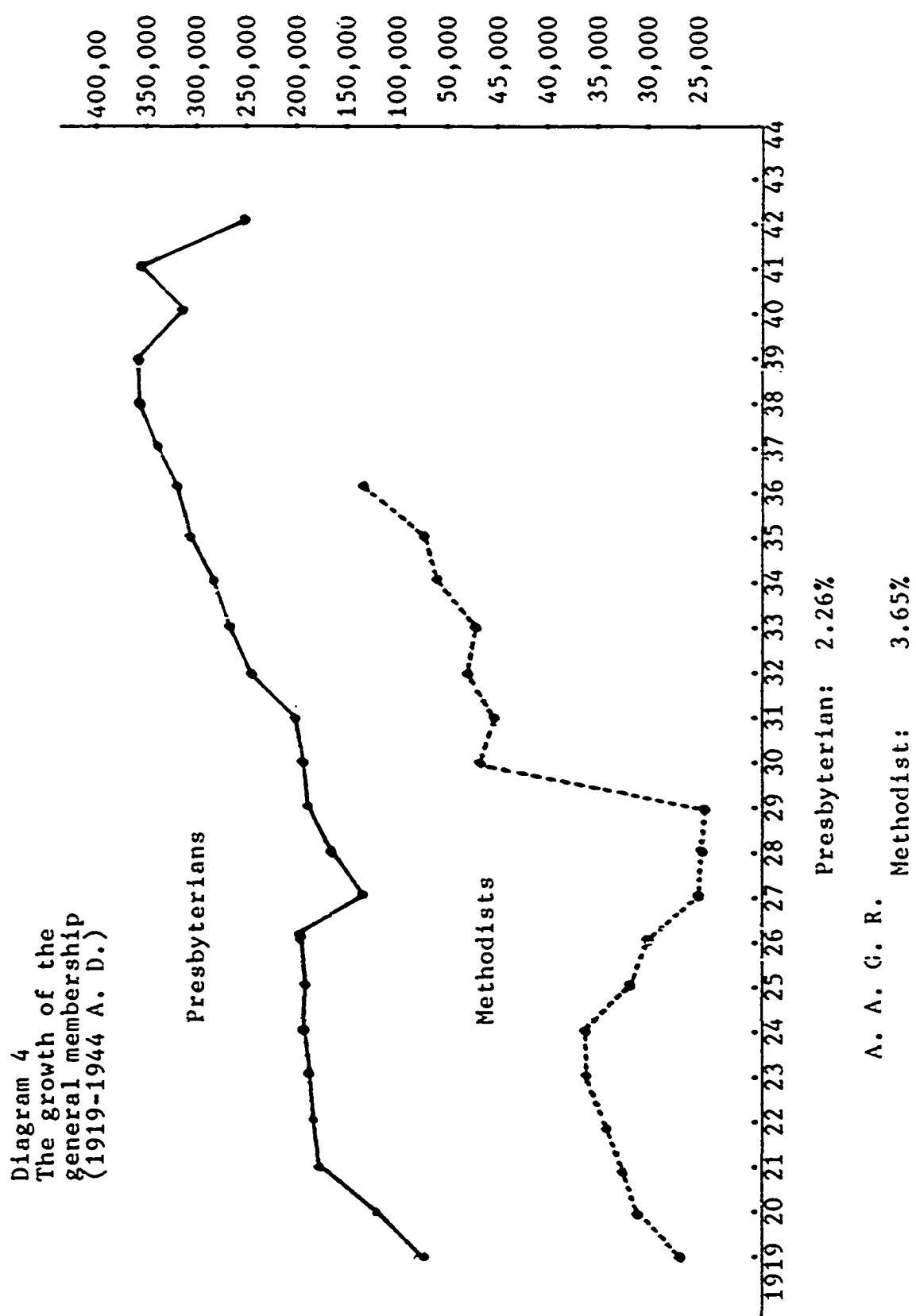
In this era, our study is from the perspective of nationalism. Actually, during this period, the church fell into its darkest times, according to the historical survey. This does not mean that the church was not still growing. Rather, church growth was showing its real potential even during the struggle with Japanese power.

On March 1, 1919, the Korean people launched a nationwide non-violent movement to accomplish political independence. They started this movement with a declaration of independence based on the philosophy of self-determination. Thirty-three persons initiated the movement, among

TABLE 3

Year	Presbyterian		Methodist	
	G.M.	B.M.	G.M.	B.M.
1919	144,062	60,954	26,993	
1920	153,915	62,748	31,875	
1921	179,158	65,984	32,694	
1922	187,271	70,188	34,215	
1923	193,850	73,352	35,263	
1924	191,877	74,165	34,145	
1925	193,823	75,655	43,145	
1926	194,408	76,655	29,185	
1927	159,060	72,447	25,785	
1928	177,416		25,295	
1929	186,994		24,042	
1930	194,678		46,492	
1931	208,912		45,142	
1932	258,216		48,574	
1933	281,918		52,764	
1934	298,431		53,634	
1935	323,974		54,636	
1936	341,077			
1937	356,281			
1938	362,077			
1939	360,838			
1940	328,648			
1941	354,913			
1942	249,666			
1943				
1944				
1945				

These statistics were provided by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development.



These statistics are also provided by the Christian Institute for the study of Justice and Development.

them sixteen Christians.<sup>9</sup>

The movement was started mainly by Christians, but was suppressed by the Japanese police. According to the official survey, made by the Presbyterians, forty-seven Presbyterians were killed and 3,804 were imprisoned during the work of the movement.<sup>10</sup>

As it happened, the movement failed. The Japanese authorities punished the church severely. The Korean church did not stop its growth in membership (See Table 3, especially from 1919-1925). It should be pointed out that, although this movement failed, the Korean secular society did not blame the church. Rather, they really recognized Christianity as the only center of power that could give any hope of independence. (See Table 3, from 1919-1920).

It is very interesting that the missionaries did not participate in this movement. Actually, they did not know about the impending movement before it happened.<sup>11</sup> During the movement, the missionary society decided to stay in a neutral position. They considered it to be only a political affair. The Korean church understood it as a religious affair.

Of course, some of the missionaries helped the move-

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<sup>9</sup> Kyung Bae Min. The Church History of Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1972) 257.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 264.

ment and shared the agony with the local church, offering sympathy.<sup>12</sup> The official negative attitude of the missionary society, after all, revealed a gap between the local church and the missionary society.

Starting about 1930, the Japanese authorities forced the Korean church to participate in the worship of Shinto, a Japanese traditional religion believing in the holiness of the ancestors of the royal family. When the Japanese asked the churches to obey the dogma of Shinto, they tried to persuade the Koreans to accept it, but not as a religious conviction. The Korean church felt the real motive of the Japanese, hidden under the terms of enforcement, was to erase the spirit of Christianity by substituting Shinto. The Korean church, of course, did not accept the ruling of the Japanese. The Japanese rulers started to persecute church members and to interfere with church activities; so that many churches and missionary schools were closed because of the pressure that was put upon them. Many Christians were tortured, imprisoned, and killed. Half of the foreign missionaries were sent to their home countries by the Japanese.

A real crisis occurred in the Korean church. In 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor precipitated the war against the United States. In those dark days, the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 266.

Korean church had to endure its most serious tragedy. The local churches were splitting according to their different understandings of Shinto worship. Some of the leaders demanded participation in Shinto worship, as they believed this to be the only way to survive. Inner conflicts became more numerous and more serious within the church, all because of different understandings of the philosophies of Shinto worship and some doubts as to the necessity of participating in this type of worship. The real split in Korean church history can be traced to this time. In spite of the agony of these times, God did not stop blessing the church. It did not die but continued to grow in membership, even during these terrible years.

We can evaluate the church during this era on the basis of self-awareness combined with nationalism. Even without missionary support, the church participated in political programs and worked toward national independence. This proved the Messianic nature of the church to all of Korean society.

After the Japanese had lost the war, they severely punished the Korean church. The people were severely punished. The church had no alternative to stepping back, since any other action would further endanger the social and political contexts of Korean life. This final frustration could be the reason for the final split of the church.

D. The Fourth Era (1945-1959)

In this era, Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945. The Korean war was fought during these years, also. During this period of uncertainty, most of the Korean churches lost all of their records. Table 4 shows a partial record of church growth during this era.

TABLE 4

Year	Presbyterian (Tong Hap)		Methodist	
	General Membership	Baptized Membership	General Membership	Baptized Membership
1945				
1951			45,716	
1952	231,473		63,236	23,116
1953	250,000		84,327	29,105
1954	103,594		97,213	34,781
1955			113,902	38,391
1956			123,760	40,792
1957			117,815	42,582
1958	110,788		268,165	44,040
1959	550,853	110,787	261,702	44,726
1960				

These statistics were provided by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development

In 1945, the Japanese rulers withdrew from the Korean Peninsula, ending a reign of thirty-five years. The church celebrated national liberation and began the dream of

reconstruction. The Russians then began to move into the northern part of Korea. They succeeded in establishing a communist government in that area. The churches in the northern area began to feel the oppression of the communists. Many pastors, theologians and congregations were killed by the Russian oppressors.

After the Korean war in 1950, the church in the northern part of the country faded away. Many Christians escaped into the southern part of Korea in which the democratic government was established with the help of the United States. Christians coming from North Korea into the churches of South Korea were primarily responsible for the growth of the church during this time. The nationwide frustration brought about by the war provided incentives for Koreans to unite in the church. The statistics concerning church membership during this time were destroyed by fire during the war. We, thus, have no authentic and accurate figures for church growth during these years. According to the report made by the Southern Presbyterian church, the number of baptized members tripled during the years between 1948 and 1958.<sup>13</sup>

Here, again, personal evangelism became the basis of church growth. The Korean war shook the country and destroyed the social environment. The church was too weak to

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<sup>13</sup>Shearer, 265.

challenge the complete social and political disorder so attempted to make the people sublimate their tragic situation through personal evangelism.

E. The Fifth Era (1960- )

From 1960 to 1980, church membership grew surprisingly, doubling during each decade.<sup>14</sup> In 1979, the membership of the protestant churches was around five million. This was about 13% of the total population.

TABLE 5

The Membership of the Protestant Church

The Number of Denominations	64
The Number of Churches	17,793
The Number of Pastors	34,035
The Number in the Congregations	4,867,657

From The Guide of the Korean Religion by the Ministry of Culture-Information, Korean Government, 1972

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<sup>14</sup>The Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, The Survey of the Korean Church History, One Hundred Years, 1975, 140.

Here is a more recent report made by the government:

TABLE 6  
The Members of the Protestant Church

1979	5,981,000
1980	7,175,000
1981	7,737,000

From The Korean Statistical Year Book, 1982, Vol 29  
(By The Ministry of Culture-Information, Korea Government, Seoul)

The following table shows Church growth in more detail.

TABLE 7

Year	Presbyterian		Methodist	
	G.M.	B.M.	G.M.	B.M.
1970	504,728		289,024	
1971			301,810	79,893
1972			314,143	98,365
1973			338,145	105,232
1974	639,605	198,442	374,710	113,059
1975	697,948	218,549	377,108	113,308
1976	757,845	243,577	419,948	124,395
1977	811,737	243,577	580,110	
1978	902,125	287,162	597,691	
1979	968,402	315,915	590,730	

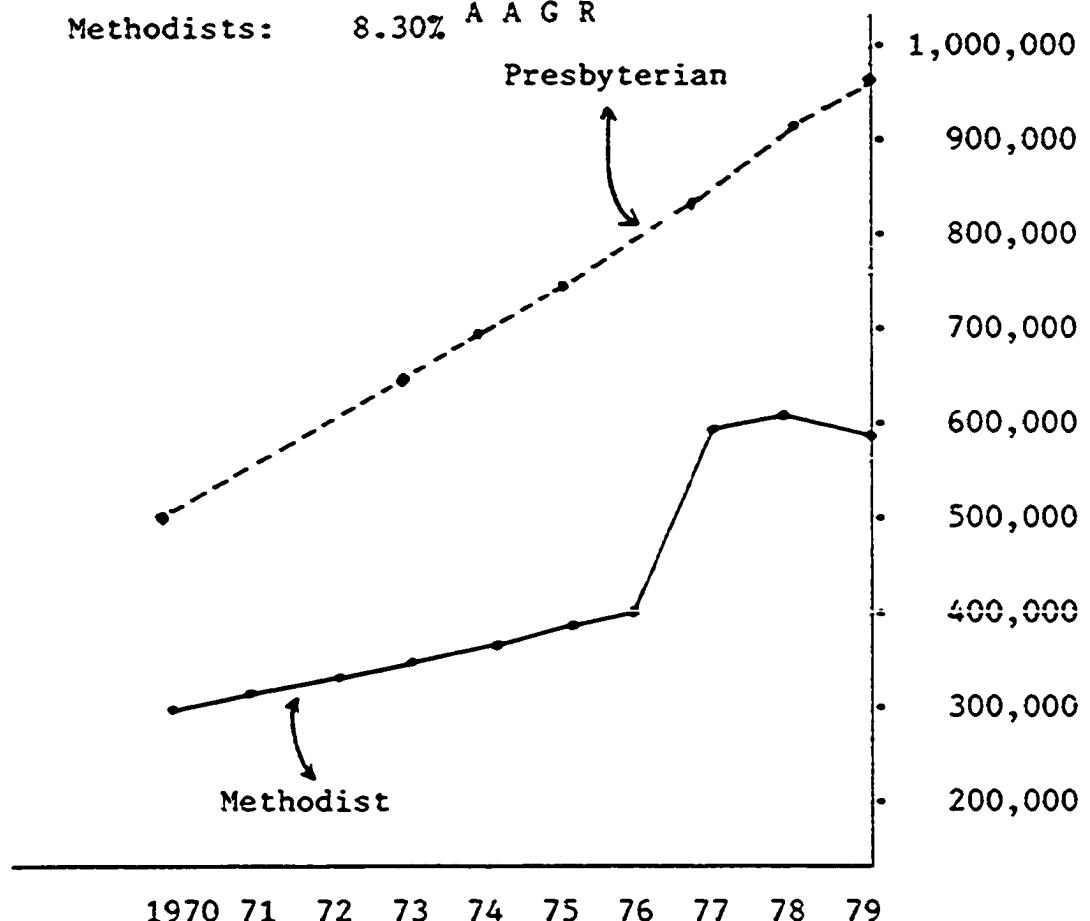
These statistics were provided by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development

DIAGRAM 5

## The Growth of the General Membership

Presbyterians: 7.39%

Methodists: 8.30% A A G R



The question comes up: How did the Korean church maintain such surprising growth during these three decades?

During this period of economic development and personal hardship, the church has held out a promise of material blessings. Professor Chan-Hie Kim of the School of Theology at Claremont states:

Particularly since the mid-1960's, Korea has performed an economic miracle and has started moving on to become an industrial nation. The Korean Christian Churches have spoken out more loudly with this pseudo-gospel of blessings. Many pulpits are resounding, explicitly and implicitly, God's promise of welfare for the Christians. . . . Economic revival in the 70's and 80's is understood as a reward of their faith in God.<sup>15</sup>

The religious mind-set of the average Korean is dominated by the Shamanism, which implies a longing for personal benefits and security from all kinds of troubles. The Korean Christian's concept of God's blessing can be characterized as a blessing of prosperity, a blessing of health, a blessing of success, etc. This Shamanistic "theology of blessing,"<sup>16</sup> along with the rapid economic growth has certainly made a contribution toward church growth in this period.

The second element, social and political insecurity among Koreans, was another contributor to the rapid church growth during this period. The rapid economic growth de-

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<sup>15</sup> Chan-Hie Kim, "Christian Churches in the Korean-American Community" (unpublished paper, presented to the 13th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Church History, San Francisco, December 29, 1983) 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 14.

stroyed the traditional values and social structure of the people. Korea has also been politically instable for the last three decades. There has been a strong anti-government, human rights movement. In addition, South Koreans have been living under constant threats from North Korean Communists, including the fear of war. All of these factors have combined to create an atmosphere of insecurity and anxiety that has caused the people to gather into the church - the place that has been able to give any security for the present and future.

The third factor is the strong evangelistic movement, which has brought surprising growth to the church. Personal evangelism has traditionally been emphasized by the Korean church from its beginning, but there has been unusual stress on evangelism during this period. This, combined with the pentecostal movement, has brought about this phenomenal growth. The Holy Spirit has been called upon, and it has sustained the church in these times. All denominations have urged members to become effective personal evangelists. It has become the pre-eminent program in local churches.

Many churches are concerned with personal spiritual satisfaction rather than social and political issues. However, there are some churches which are expressing concern for social and political issues and human rights.

The growth of the church could be summarily credited to these three factors plus the Shamanistic conception of

**blessing**

Dr. Kim has a theory that could explain the rapid growth. He identifies four reasons: (1) a yearning for a new religion and Western learning, (2) the religious mentality of the Korean, (3) evangelistic zeal, and (4) uncertainty and insecurity at every level of social life.<sup>17</sup> These factors are so closely related that we can hardly think of them separately. Except for the evangelistic zeal, these seem to be external forces that combine to the advantage of the church. The external factors cannot be ignored, but we could say that, without the evangelistic zeal, church growth would not take place. We can say, then, that the mainstream of evangelistic history in the Korean church indicates a strong interest in and use of personal evangelism.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE KOREAN CHURCH IN LOS ANGELES

The history of Korean-Americans begins in 1903, when less than one hundred farm laborers were employed on a sugar cane farm in Hawaii. It was not until the late 1960's that a significant number of Koreans immigrated into this country, the promised land, seeking a prosperous life and escape from the political and economic turmoil of their home country.

At their arrival, most of the newcomers made their homes in Southern California, especially in the Los Angeles area. This became an ethnic community, in which Korean immigrants established businesses as well as homes. The community grew, year by year, and as the population increased, Korean churches were established and grew in the ethnic community.

Since Southern California is a multi-cultural population, including White people as well as a large group of Spanish-speaking, Black, and Korean and other Asian immigrants, who have each established their own ghettos in which individual characteristics of the different groups have been developed, the area has become a real multi-cultural community.

For a long time, the sociologists pointed to the social classes as the cause of religious diversity. They

ignored all other features, such as ethnic diversity and the cultural multiplicity of this society. In other words, the diversity of national origin, denominations, and region have contributed to the mosaic of the religious culture of this nation. As a result, the American experience is nothing more than another ethnic experience which is not a common experience of the whole nation, at all.

It became clear during the 1960's, when racial self-consciousness was evident in many ethnic groups, that there is a relationship between ethnic background and religion. The assertions of American Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, native Americans and the Asians were expressed in a religious form, and finally, the "ethnicity had turned out to be the framework or skeleton of religion in America; around 1960 that skeleton was taken out of the closer."<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that there are over three hundred Korean churches in the Los Angeles area, most of them located in the Korean community. Churches play an important role in the expression of the identity of individuals within the community. In the case of the Korean churches, they do much more than simply express identity. Their existence becomes an expression of Korean-ness in the middle of the cultural diversity of this society. Church membership is a

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Marty, A Nation of Behaviors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 159.

self-affirming activity through which their identity as Koreans is discovered and maintained. Joseph Kitagawa, said, "religion is concerned not only with what is usually regarded as 'religious' dimension, but with the 'totality of life and the world'."<sup>2</sup> The Korean churches embrace the totality of life in this community of Koreans in the Los Angeles area.

As we recall the characteristics of the environmental context of the Korean churches in the Los Angeles area, it is necessary to analyze the different aspects of the church: the cultural, sociological, and theological. It will help us to understand the context of the Korean churches and provide the idea of evangelism that is appropriate to this context.

#### A. Cultural Aspects.

As was stated previously, the churches of the Los Angeles area face multi-cultural challenges from society. They exist as a part of a mosaic society in which the Koreans are one facet of the entire picture. Culturally, the multiplicity can be reduced to a bi-cultural context of the traditional culture and other cultures. This is enough for those who retreat inside the boundaries of the church. In other words, the church provides self-identity for the

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Kitagawa, "Primitive Classical and Modern Religion" in History of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Koreans, and outside the boundary of the church, the people have to face the other cultures that confuse their Korean identity.

A considerable number of churches operate Korean schools where opportunities are provided for the study of traditional Korean culture to those children who were born in this country. The language program is considered to be the essential part of the school program because using the Korean language is the criterion of cultural purity. Assimilation into the American culture is not prevented. However, the traditional culture of Korea has been in the central position in all cultural programs of the Korean schools.

Here we can easily see that the Korean immigrant church is caught between the traditional Korean culture and the new cultures that people have to face in their daily lives outside the boundaries of the church. Their challenge is to maintain their Korean-ness by maintaining their traditional culture in the midst of a multi-cultural society.

Inside the church, this cultural multiplicity has been recognized and admitted reluctantly but has resulted in modifications and adaptations of their original tradition. For instance, Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year in Korean churches, as it is, naturally, in other Christian churches. However, in the Korean church, the birthdays of their ancestors are remembered and observed

with equally important ceremonies. The traditional offering of food to the deceased, yet living, spirit of the ancestors is practiced in the churches. Mysterious religious experiences do not require Biblical grounds, so long as they are affirmed and supported in their traditional understanding of their religion, consciously or unconsciously. There is no clear line between the biblical faith of the Christians and the traditional practice of the ethnic religion. The church is understood as the protector of the Korean identity and cultural heritage.

This nature of Christian practice as a cultural religion requires of us a theological analysis that follows in the next section of the study.

#### B. Theological Aspects.

As was pointed out previously, it seems that there is no clear line between the biblical faith of the Christians and the cultural practice in the Korean immigrant churches in the Los Angeles area. They show tendencies toward religious syncretism in that they accept the traditional practice of their former religions, particularly in the seeking of mysterious experiences. As long as their practices do not go against their traditional culture, as long as practices are found in their cultural tradition, people are not criticized and can be mixed with the Christian practice of the people.

As was correctly pointed out by Peter Burger,<sup>3</sup> "The church is digging its own grave," in the syncretic practice of their religion. The Korean immigrant church of Los Angeles should<sup>4</sup> face this problem courageously to be able to find their own identity as the followers of Jesus Christ.

Will Herberg said correctly that the ethnic church was a part of the immigrant baggage for the European ethnic groups in the beginning period of this nation. For this reason, the ethnic churches became the community centers for the different groups as they struggled for survival in unfamiliar surrounding. We do not see any differences among the Korean churches in this area (as cultural and communal centers for the Korean immigrant ethnic society). Yet, the different cultural heritage of non-Christian Koreans is the cause of syncretism in the name of cultural protection by the immigrant churches.

In this sense, evangelism should be based upon strong biblical bases. Together with the characteristics of the immigrant church that embraces "the totality of life,"<sup>5</sup> the "principal object of church that is to produce eternal felicity" should be stressed.

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Burger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1969)

<sup>4</sup>Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic and the Jew (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960)

<sup>5</sup>Alexis de Toqueville, Democracy in America, Vol II, Ed. by Phillip Bradley, (New York: Knopf, 1945) 127.

Besides the issue of religious syncretism, "prosperity in a new land" also becomes a center of theological discussion in the Korean immigrant churches. For the new immigrant, becoming a member of the church in the ethnic community means beginning a new life under the guidance of God. The new life is considered by them to be a totally different life in a totally different place with the threat of the unknown in the future. Psychological depression should be transformed into a positive energy for survival for the new immigrants. The church, in this situation, gives them assurance that their new life means prosperity in a new world under the guiding hand of God.<sup>6</sup>

This becomes a crucial issue of theological discussion, particularly in constructing a new model of evangelism: the holistic evangelistic approach. Without a sound theological and Biblical grounding, it could turn out to be a simple civil religion in a pragmatic fashion.

### C. Sociological Aspects.

In this section, we would like to discuss three characteristics of the sociological context of the Korean immigrant churches in the Los Angeles area: group identity, security and spiritual emphasis.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Bellah, The Broken Covenant (New York: Seabury Press, 1975) 66. See also Jack Stott, Defining America.

Let us start with group identity. The idea of group identity has an important place in the church life of the Koreans. In the pluralistic socio-cultural context of the immigrant churches, group identity automatically becomes an indispensable latent assumption in church life. When the immigrants arrive in a hostile new world, there are not many choices for them. They can join the ethnic community or automatically belong, according to their own affinity or their family relationships. Psychologically, too, group identity helps to ease the pressure that newcomers have to deal with. The fear of the unknown in the future, fear of the hostile world outside and of loneliness brings them together in the community life in which the church has grown. By attending church services, they find their own identity, which was not possible in the pluralistic society. They can also find their cultural heritages as emphasized in the church programs.

A sense of security is another element in the ethnic church of the Korean immigrants in this area. As was pointed out in the last section, the fear of the unknown in the future, fear of loneliness and of the hostile world outside bring people together to form a ghetto where they are protected from the outside dangers. Most of the immigrants stay in the ghetto, taking advantage of the security, psychologically and physically.

As a solution to many of these problems, the churches

provide English language courses, job training sessions and other programs that are crucial for survival in a foreign country. The process of secularization of the traditional image of the church takes place here, and it is to be noted and studied carefully for the proper understanding of evangelism in this context.

The third important characteristic of the sociological context of the immigrant church is its spiritual thrust. There are two factors to be analyzed in studying the issue of spiritual thrust of the immigrant Korean churches in this area: the spiritual interpretation of the immigration and the syncretistic tendency that was pointed out in the theological analysis.

First, we could find the same examples of spiritual interpretations of the immigrant existence in other immigrant churches. Robert Bellah has said, "The New England fathers began to interpret their situation, as errand into the wilderness."<sup>7</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, a Korean theologian, also sees the immigrant existence of the Koreans as a call to the wilderness. His idea of "marginality"<sup>8</sup> implies the possibility of seeking a new existence from this wilderness.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Byung-Suh Kim and Sang Hyun Lee (eds.) The Korean Immigrant in America (Montclair, NJ: Association of Korean Christian Scholars in North America, 1980) 37-42. Lee seeks to see the possibility of new existence of Christians in the marginal existence of this society.

In the midst of insecure situations, immigrants interpret their existence as the errand for God in the wilderness.

The other factor for the spiritual thrust of the Korean immigrant church could be traced in the syncretiatic tendency of the church. Out of their function of preserving the cultural heritage, the generosity of allowing the non-Christian cultural heritage inside the church has smeared the clear line of distinction between the traditional worship of the spirits and ancestors and the Christian life. Such practices as food offerings have been carried on inside Christian homes, and some of the cultural traditions have been practiced even inside the church. Many of the seekers of the mysterious experience have their motives, not in the maturity of the Christian life, but in the old practice of the traditional religion. They have been received into the churches without crossing the line that distinguishes Christianity from other religious practice. Jesus, for this reason, has been understood as one of the saints in human history to many new Christians. Thus, the syncretiatic combination of mysticism has created an uncritical spiritual thrust of the Korean immigrant churches.

To summarize this chapter, the environmental context of the Korean immigrant church of the Los Angeles area has been analyzed, revealing three aspects: the cultural, the

theological, and the sociological. Holistic evangelism should be developed on the basis of our understanding of this complex context. For this reason, evangelism should embrace the context of the church as its significant determining factor in the holistic approach.

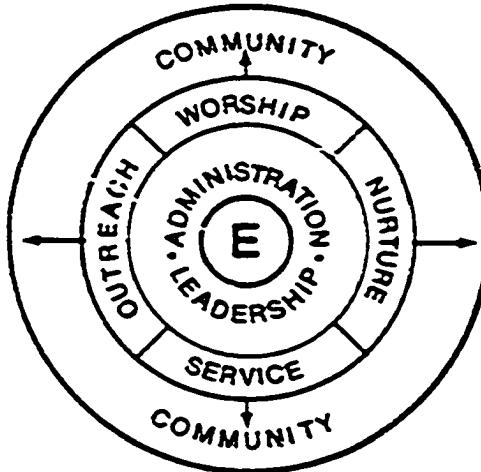
## CHAPTER V

TOWARD AN EVANGELIZATION OF KOREAN-AMERICAN  
CHURCHES: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

The evangelization of the Korean churches must draw together the personal and social elements of the gospel, seeking, at the same time, the conversion of individual persons and the building of a community right for Korean-American people to live in. Most Korean churches in the Los Angeles area use evangelization as a means of church extension. They concern themselves only with the individual soul, as if that were the only purpose of the ministry.

Korean churches in this area must seek a holistic evangelism which is concerned with individual and social, physical and spiritual needs of Korean immigrants. Thus, remembering the message of the last chapter, we will have to attempt a holistic approach to the evangelism of the churches. As we mentioned earlier, evangelism is not a separate part of the work within the church's structure or overall program, but it is the whole ministry of the church and its reason for being and acting in the community. What the author calls this is a church's total ministry in terms of a holistic evangelization.

The following diagram, figured by John Marby, illustrates evangelism (E) as standing at the heart of the church.



Professor Johnson uses this diagram with the following statement:

Because Evangelism stands at the heart of the church, it pulsates through the worship of God, the nurture of the community, the serving hands of the faithful, and the intentional efforts of believers to reach out to others. These functions affirm God's unconditional love and passion that all persons have fellowship with Deity. A balanced expression of evangelism evidences itself through worship, nurture, service, and outreach, and requires strong leadership and administration.<sup>1</sup>

The definition explored in the above, that evangelism is a threefold programmatic occurrence, which we are going to apply: (1) the bringing of persons into a vital and living relationship with God and neighbor through faith in Jesus Christ — personal evangelization; (2) the experiencing of salvation through faith, and a maturing personality rooted in Christ's image — nurturing evangelization; and

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<sup>1</sup>Ben Johnson, An Evangelism Primer (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983) 43. This figure was suggested by John Marby, a former student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

(3) the striving to bring persons into the kingdom of God with the understanding of social implications of the gospel — social evangelization.

A. Personal Evangelization.

Our evangelistic mission is best understood in the words of the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them . . . and Lo, I am with you always." (Mt. 28:19-20).

The prime task of evangelism is to bring new persons to Christ.

The Korean church in this area has to be concerned with those who have never heard the gospel, rather than "sheep-stealing." Over 25% of the Korean people in this area are outside of the church. And then, who has the mission of evangelizing? In one sense, every Christian is a part of the ongoing task of evangelism. This type of personal evangelism has been functioning for a hundred years, since the early missionaries introduced it to the Korean people. Surely God intends to use His people, from time to time, to reach whomsoever He calls His people. Personal testimony, then, should not be neglected. In addition, "The whole church is a missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the people of God."<sup>2</sup> This is a statement of Pope Paul.

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<sup>2</sup>Roger C. Bassham, Mission Theology 1948-1975. (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979) 308.

Therefore, all areas of church life should be sensitive to evangelism for those who have not heard the gospel. Traditionally, revivalism has been such a dominant part of the Korean churches that nearly all of our associations with the word "evangelism" spring from revivals. Revivalism has emphasized personal witnessing, but some of the rigid formulas of personal witnessing and its tactless aggressiveness have contributed heavily to the negative image of all evangelism. Even though there are troublesome revivals and personal witnessing, there are also good productive forms of both. We have to be careful that the corruption and distortion of those practices which seek to control the divine spirit and dehumanize persons in the name of revivalism are not permitted to spoil the field for honest and constructive evangelism.

Like revivalistic evangelism, personal evangelism in the Korean church depends greatly upon the method of proclamation. The proclamation dimension of the evangelistic process is absolutely essential. Evangelism, in proclamation and other dimensions, seldom takes place in a vacuum. More than that, evangelism training courses teach people one basic approach to witnessing. They are trained to announce a blanket gospel message suitable for all. The traditional method or motive of evangelism is no longer viable or credible, because we are living in a pluralistic society where there

exists such a wide diversity of immigrants. A new evangelism, expressed in terms of contemporary experience, must begin with finding new motives for personal witnessing. The new image must denote the powerful, life transforming fellowship rooted in the Holy Spirit. "The power and influence of the Holy Spirit in the whole process of evangelization, and in the search for unity, received clear recognition in the statement that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization."<sup>3</sup>

#### B. Nurturing Evangelization.

Evangelism must give "particular attention to people inside the church but living outside the Christian life, as well as to Christians who need to have their faith deepened and nourished to enable them to become more mature."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is an urgent task of evangelization, particularly for Korean churches in this area. It is often stated that 74% of the total immigrants are Christians. How many among them are real Christians? There are undoubtedly many "churchgoers" without any real awareness of Christian faith. There are many church "attenders" with various reasons for being there - needs that can be met in church. At this point it becomes important to minister to their needs before seeking to help those outside the church.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 310.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 308.

The Engel/Søgaard scale<sup>5</sup> gives us a compact overview of people in the church. The scale distinguishes peoples' attitudes toward Christianity with eleven different steps.<sup>6</sup> They are: no awareness, awareness, some knowledge, knowledge, implication seen, personal need, confrontation, conversion, re-evaluation, incorporation, and propagation.

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<sup>5</sup>Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, Planning Strategies for World Evangelization (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 214.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 215.

THE PEOPLE PROFILE	PEOPLE A					PEOPLE B					PEOPLE C							
	\$ AT THIS POINT			ATTITUDE	RATE OF CHANGE	\$ AT THIS POINT			ATTITUDE	RATE OF CHANGE	\$ AT THIS POINT			ATTITUDE	RATE OF CHANGE			
DECISION POINT	25	50	75	+	0	-	25	50	75	+	0	-	25	50	75	+	0	-
NO AWARENESS	-7																	
AWARENESS	-6				X					X								
SOME KNOWLEDGE	-5				X	CONSTANT				X								
KNOWLEDGE	-4									X								
IMPLICATIONS SEEN	-3																	
PERSONAL NEED	-2																	
CONFRONTATION	-1																	
CONVERSION	0																	
RE EVALUATION	+1									X								
INCORPORATION	+2									X								
PROPAGATION	+3									X								

What does this profile tell us? If we take it seriously, we have put too much effort into the area of nurturing evangelism. People should be reached at least in group B, where all are aware of Christianity. There is no one at -7. About 25% are at -6, 50% at -5, and 10% at -4. This is an ideal model that everybody does know. Thus, the church has a positive attitude and is changing. At this point, people can be mobilized, using their positive attitudes for personal testimony, nurturing themselves, and social evangelization. This profile reminds us that we can monitor three types of outcomes: the changes that are taking place in knowledge of the gospel, the changes in attitude, and, finally, the rate of change.

Paul recognized that it is vital to be able to say of oneself, "Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us." (Phil. 3:17). When a man or a woman can honestly make such a statement, his/her life will prove to be powerful in evangelism. However, there is much to be done if the church is to reach this nurturing evangelization. The author would like to re-emphasize four basic methods which our church has identified. First is nurturing through worship experience. The Christian church possesses no greater instrument for evangelization than worship. The people can be inspired and nurtured through the worship experience. Alan Walker has said: "There is a tremendous need for worship to be designed . . .

Therefore one of the great and urgent needs of the church is to recover evangelical worship.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, many Christians have been bored and disappointed with a typical worship service. We must design a new form which will draw people into the mood and emotion of worship.

Second, Bible study must be a very effective method of nurturing evangelization. The Korean church is strongly in favor of Bible study as an important part of church participation. Without some biblical background, we may as well have a pragmatically expressed civil religion.

Third, fellowship is a great channel for nurturing evangelization. As was pointed out previously, the sociological aspects of the Korean immigrant churches in the Los Angeles area demand solutions to many of these problems. We must provide fellowship to bring fulfillment of the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of immigrant people.

The last important nurturing evangelization could be performed by prayer — a large part of the heritage of the Korean church. To provide various types of prayer meetings is to give a deeper richness to the fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Nurturing evangelization is "a challenge to conversion, renewal, authenticity, quantitative and qualitative

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Walker, The New Evangelism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975) 67.

growth.<sup>8</sup> This reminds us that all of us are called to missionary work . . . not clergy or specialists alone; that it is a vital year-round program . . . not limited to special "revivals" or events; that it involves the whole church . . that it takes place both at church and also away from the church; that it involves both decision and continued growth in discipleship; that it is centered in persons, not numbers; that it is best achieved through relationships and communities of faith and love; that it is a call to reach out . . . not just to wait and receive; that it is undertaken with the assurance that we are not alone; our Lord is with us always.

### C. Social Evangelization.

"Evangelism must be inserted in this world and in the total experience of man, who must respond out of the depth of historical existence."<sup>9</sup> Now we have to closely apply a holistic evangelism in our local community situation. Korean immigrants are now situated in America, in a society in which their daily experiences and needs are totally different from those experienced at home in Korea. Therefore, the ministry of the churches must change.

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<sup>8</sup> Mortimer Arias, "That the World May Believe," International Review of Missions (January 1970) 128.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

It must reinterpret evangelism within the framework of the new culture and society. Korean-American have been suffering many kinds of oppression. They are economically oppressed like any minority oppression. They are also politically oppressed when majority groups use political power to keep Asian-American out of the decision-making process, even when those decisions affect the lives and destinies of the Asian-American.<sup>10</sup>

Another form of oppression for Asian-Americans is social oppression, which alienates and ostracizes them, keeping them from interacting with one another equally. The Korean churches really must move into group consciousness-raising activities, especially in the area of community issues involved in holistic evangelism. The church carries the responsibility of reconciliation in the community. New and creative interpretations of the Christian imperative from the perspective of a holistic evangelization are essential for the future growth of the ministry.

As we have seen, this three-fold pragmatic evangelization must be applied and systematized into every program of church life in order to build a holistic evangelism.

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<sup>10</sup> Roger Daniels and Harry H.L. Kitano, American Racism (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979) 16-17.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

Korean churches have not stopped growing, ever, during our hundred-year history. The reasons for such rapid growth have been described in Chapter IV. All of these reasons deal with outside forces or people outside the church except for the strong evangelistic feeling that was inherited from the early missionaries.

Despite the continuous growth in Korea and in America, there are some negative aspects which have become evident in recent years. All of these negative aspects, including social, educational and spiritual problems and recruitment techniques, must be dealt with so that the churches may be renewed and revitalized and so that the good reputation of the church may be restored. Only then will the church be able to fill the spiritual vacuum among its members.

It is the contention of the author that the church must be revitalized through new evangelization. This will have to include solutions to the problems of inadequate understanding and better management of evangelistic activities among churches in the Los Angeles area.

On the one hand, the Korean churches must be aware of negative consequences experienced because of the personal evangelism that has become traditional. On the other hand, the evangelism used must be multi-faceted and applied to

people inside and outside the church.

When a teacher of the Law tried to trap Jesus, Jesus said that "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' The whole law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments."

In this saying we find some basic Christian attitudes. The first is to get a good belief. It shows one side of the evangelization of the church: that is, to emphasize salvation of individual souls. The second is to get a consciousness of neighbors. It shows the other side, which is to emphasize social action (the love for neighbors). These two aspects cannot be separated, one from the other. This relates to the love of God which is personal, individual and universal.

The Korean church in the Los Angeles area must stake its life upon the call of Christ to build up His body in a holistic system of evangelization.

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